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Subject: Possible Site Recommendation for Yucca Mountain

Part of Records Package / Supplement / Correction



- \_Possible Site Recommenda.doc

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### "Possible Site Recommendation for Yucca Mountain"

The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> have demonstrated clearly and tragically that the United States is vulnerable to terrorists. Shipping high-level radioactive wastes by truck and rail through 43 states over the next 25 to 30 years to Yucca Mountain, Nevada, and allowing the wastes to "cool" above ground for varying lengths of time create opportunities for many more acts of terrorism.

A few weeks ago, the FBI made the announcement that 20 men obtained "hazmat" licenses illegally. In the Christian Science Monitor, October 1, 2001, p.2, the reporter covering this story called "America's roads may be just as vulnerable as its skies," quoted terrorism expert Stephen Gale, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania: "Think about it this way, you have all these spreadsheets looking at how to do an attack. How can you do it with the lowest costs and the greatest impact? 'Hazmats' are tailor-made." The story reminded me of the train derailment last July in Baltimore. The hazardous cargo caught fire in a tunnel and burned for five days. Shipments of high-level radioactive wastes could put thousands of lives at risk and could contaminate vast areas of the country as the result of accidents or acts of terrorism. We now know that the almost unimaginable can really happen.

Another news story, one in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on July 1<sup>st</sup>, revealed a trend to reduce trauma services at the nation's hospitals. Accidents involving exposure to radiation require special emergency services, services that only a limited number of trauma centers can provide. Here in St. Louis, each designated center has only one or two beds. The possibility that trauma services could be curtailed, limiting treatment for the already small number of accident victims that could be accommodated, is frightening. Because St. Louis is situated, roughly, in the center of the country, we can expect many shipments of radioactive wastes to pass through our communities for years. Our local facilities could not handle a large-scale nuclear emergency.

There has been some discussion in the media since Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> about the feasibility of protecting nuclear power plants from sabotage or terrorist attack. In an Associated Press story on Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>, reporter William J. Kole warns: "If a nuclear power plant were hit by

an airliner, the reactor would not explode, but such a strike could destroy the plant's cooling systems. That could cause the nuclear fuel rods to overheat and produce a steam explosion that could release lethal radioactivity into the atmosphere."

In 1998, NRC's program for determining whether or not nuclear power plants could avoid terrorist attacks was eliminated in an effort to cut the agency's costs. David Orrick, who was director of the program at the time it was shut down, disclosed in a memo that 47% of the nation's nuclear power plants failed their anti-terrorist tests. The story is covered on the front page of the Los Angeles Times, Nov. 3, 1998. Now there is no testing program in place.

The logical solution to the high level nuclear waste problem would seem to be not to create any more waste, since there is no safe location or technology to dispose of what has been accumulating at nuclear power plants for decades. If these facilities are not safe enough to house high-level wastes, they're not safe enough to house the reactors that generate them.

Because accidents and acts of terrorism have already happened, we know they can happen. Why increase the opportunities for more by sending these dangerous materials through our communities nationwide and consolidating them at a single, large repository site with known earthquake faults and volcanoes?

Sandler, p.2